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Making Fabric

Lampshades



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OREGON STATE COLLEGE
EXTENSION SERVICE
HOME ECONOMICS

MAKING FABRIC LAMPSHADES

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REQUIREMENTS OF GOOD LIGHTING

Lampshades are only a part of a good lamp. For GOOD LIGHTING you need the following:

Enough light

Do not rely on your eyes to tell you the amount of light you are getting. Measure the light with a light meter. Buy a lamp designed to give you the desired amount of light specified for the task.

Light in the right places, and in enough places

Provide a good lamp wherever there is a comfortable seat that the family uses - regularly.

Provide general light around the room. If the brightest light in the room gives 40 footcandles on a task, there should be at least 1/10 as much light, or 4 footcandles all around the room.

Freedom from glare, that is, no wasted light

Avoid direct glare from unshaded light sources and reflected glare from furniture and furnishings.

Least possible distraction between the tasks and the surroundings

Provide contrast to see a specific object easily, but avoid distractions, such as noticeably lighter, darker, brighter, duller surroundings or warmer or cooler colors that pull the eye away.

Good lighting is COMFORTABLE lighting

A GOOD LAMP FOR READING OR WORK HAS:

Height to allow wide spread of light. Measurements to top of shade, except for pin-to-wall type are:

Large floor lamp	about 60 inches
Swing-arm and Bridge lamps	about 56 inches
Table lamp (large)	about 28 inches
Table lamp	about 25 inches
Pin-to-wall	
bottom edge of shade, from floor	about 48 inches
Dresser lamp	about 26 inches
Dressing table lamp	about 19 inches

A reflector to soften the light:

(Certified Reflector) with new certified lamps
(Diffusing disc)

Diffusing bowl -- with older lamps
Bulbs that soften light
 Bolite
 Tube lights

A shade designed and constructed to give the required amount of light, but no uncomfortable glare and brightness. The over-all size is larger than the older shades.

Top with wide opening to distribute light around the room.

Depth to cover the light source.

Spread (flaring shade) to allow light to reach to davenport, chair, piano keys; nearly straight-sided for tall lamps where task is near, as on a desk.

Lining, white or light-colored to reflect light.

Dense enough to conceal the lighted bulb and to diffuse the light.

Bulb of the required wattage and voltage, not blackened, and free from dust. Certified lamps have multiple filament type bulbs to provide flexible lighting.

Switches, well designed. Certified lamps have switches approved by the Underwriters' Laboratories and are tested to operate a minimum of 12,000 times.

USE YOUR LAMP WISELY

With chairs and davenports, place lamps for reading or work so that the light comes over the shoulder on the task, not in your eyes. The source of light is as close as is possible to the task.

Placement depends on:

The person who uses the lamp--his height, size, whether he is right-handed or left-handed and whether he sits or lies when using the lamp.

The furniture--the height and depth of the furniture; the height and size of the table on which the lamp is placed.

The arrangement of the furniture; the openings and passage ways in the room.

The color and texture of the room furnishings.

A LAMPSHADE OF FABRIC

Frames with upper and lower rings and rib wires are covered with cloth, one layer on the inside and one on the outside, with the rib wires between. This type of frame is usually covered with a fitted cloth cover and lining. However, a pleated cloth cover and a fitted cloth lining may be used if desired.

To make a fitted cloth cover and lining, you will need the following:

A frame with upper and lower rings and rib wires:

The frame should be sturdy and strong with ribs close enough together to keep the cloth from sinking in and thus spoiling the shape of the shade. A frame with round rings is easy to fit. Frames that are oval, oval on the front and straight on the back, square, six or eight-sided, and those with collars and with scalloped edges also may be covered. Rings may be of round or of flat wire. Rib wires may be straight or curved, and even or uneven in number.

Cloth for cover and lining:

When put together, the two materials should let some light through but must be thick enough to hide the lighted bulb. Do not use fabrics that stretch or fray badly. Choose those pleasing in color whether the lamp is lighted or unlighted. Warm colors, such as gold, ecru, peach, and yellow, usually look well; do not use cold, bright blues, blue-greens, and blue-reds for this type of shade.

For the cover, fabrics of plain color and with an interesting texture or self-pattern usually are the most pleasing. A shade of patterned material, if pleasing when light shines through it, looks well when used with a plain simple base and in rooms with plain walls.

Good materials are butcher's linen; cotton, silk, and rayon dress fabrics, and lightweight drapery fabrics; percale, sateen, chambray, dotted swiss, seersucker, muslin, dimity, organdy, taffeta, and some cretonnes, unglazed chintzes, and gingham.

For the lining, choose plain material through which you cannot see the lighted bulb easily in a white or near white, such as sateen, muslin, sheeting, or various lining and dress materials of cotton, rayon, or silk.

The amount of material you need depends on the shape as well as on the size of the shade and on the number of seams. Use the same yardage for the outside and for the lining. The amounts here given are for covers made with two seams and are generous; you need a length at least twice that of one rib.

You will need the following amounts of material for a frame with a lower ring diameter of:

from 7 to 10 inches, about 1/2 yard
from 11 to 13 inches, about 3/4 yard
from 14 to 16 inches, about 1 yard
from 17 to 19 inches, about 1 1/4 yards

Trimming:

Braid, tape, fringe, binding, small ball fringe, cording, ruffling, pleating, rickrack, bias folds, ribbons, and the like may be used.

The trimming must be wide enough to cover the seam allowances so that they do not show when the shade is lighted.

Flat paint, white or a very light color

Brush to paint frame

Tape to wind rings

Cotton-twill, 1/2-inch tape is best

Scotch tape, 1 small roll

Bias fold of the cover material, or silk tape, or braid:

This is sewed on the outside of the shade to hide the seams, it need not be used on small shades.

Colorless nail polish

Clamp clothespins, 2 dozen or more

Piece of an old sheet or some similar material--use this to wrap the shade to help keep it clean.

Sewing supplies:

Shears, sharp

Pins, non-rusting dressmaker

Thread:

For stitching the cover and the lining--silk or cotton of a color that goes well with the material.

For sewing the outside and the lining, strong white cotton, No. 24 white.

For sewing the trimming, coarse white or of a matching color.

Needles: sharps, one No. 5 or 6 for coarse thread and one No. 7 or 8 for finer thread. Betweens or shorts may be used.

Thimble

Ruler, or flexible metal rule, or cloth tape line and yardstick

Sewing machine

Tissue paper, cheesecloth, or other like material for pressing

Iron and ironing board.

STEPS IN COVERING THE SHADE

Prepare the frame

Remove the old cover, and wipe the frame with a clean, soft cloth. If it has not been painted, apply one or more coats of flat white or light-colored paint to prevent it from rusting.

Reshape the frame if it does not lie flat. Do this by pushing opposite sides down or together.

If the frame is badly out of shape, rest one side on the table and gently push the opposite side. Now hold the frame over the edge of a table and pull to lengthen one side if it seems short.



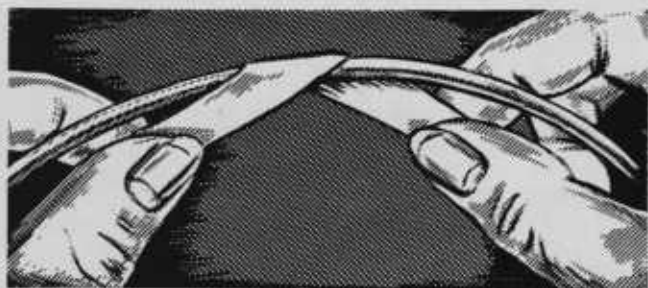
The reshaped frame.

Figure 1.

Winding the rings

Wind the rings with 1/2-inch cotton-twill tape. Rayon tape may be used but it is less strong when wet. Slightly wider tape may be used for larger shades. Straight tape, rather than bias, is used because it has only a single thickness and because the edges are finished. Rib wires and cross wires are not wound.

Thread a needle to have ready to sew the end of the tape when you finish winding. Wind the rings with tape as shown in Figures 2 and 4.



Always place the tape against the ring on a slant so that it will be wound on the bias. Use the tape directly from the roll or card, or cut off a length about twice the distance around the ring.

Figure 2.

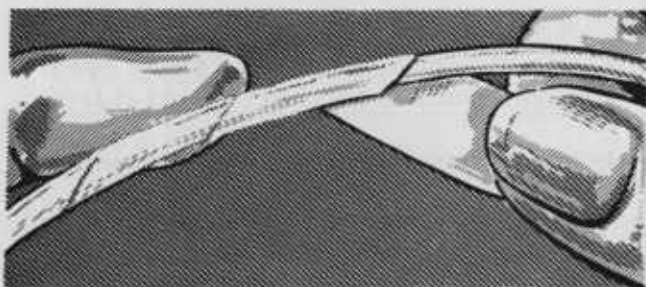


Figure 3.

Use scotch tape to hold the end of the winding tape on the wire.

Wind the tape; overlap the edges for about half the width. Pull the tape so that it is smooth and firm and does not turn easily on the wire.

When you need more tape, use a clamp clothespin to hold firm the part you have wound.



Figure 4.

When you come to cross wires in the top ring, wind around each one in a figure eight; over the cross wire; under it; up and around the ring; then, continue to wind in the direction in which you were going. See Figure 4.

Continue winding until you have covered the beginning of the tape, then cut off the end and sew the tape firmly in place.

With an even number of rib wires, seams may be made at any two opposite ribs if the distances between each are even. Put a pencil mark on the winding tape at both the upper and lower ends of the ribs you choose.

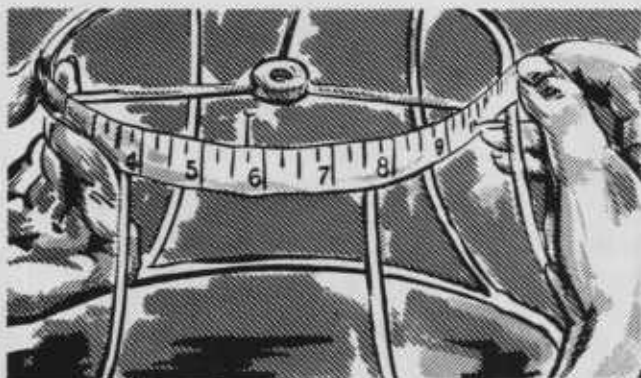
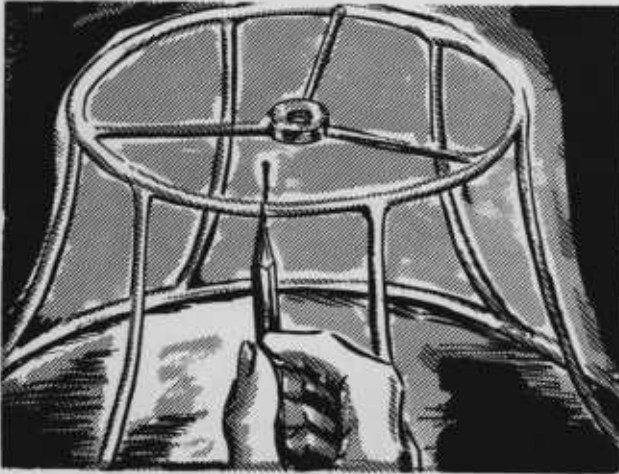


Figure 5.

On one half of the frame, measure, on both the upper and the lower rings, the center front between these two ribs, as shown in Figure 5.

Do the same on the other half.



Mark these two center points, bringing the pencil mark to the inside.

Figure 6.

Make the shade

Both the lining and the outside usually have two joining seams. One seam or several may be used, however, depending on the shape and the size of the frame, the number of rib wires, the amount of cloth you have, and on its design. Always make a seam directly over a rib, and plan to have no seam at the center front of the shade.

Make the pattern

Make a pattern for half the frame. If the distance between ribs or if their length varies, both halves may need to be fitted. Use the material that will be a part of the outside cover, a piece of the lining material, or another similar fabric.

Prepare the material as follows:

Lay the material for the pattern on the ironing board, wrong side up.

Place over this a piece of cheesecloth or tissue paper.

Press, with the iron at medium heat. Vary the temperature of the iron according to the requirements of the fabric you are using.

If steam is necessary, dip a second piece of cheesecloth in water, and wring it until it is quite dry. Lay this damp cloth over the dry one and press.

After this, a cool iron may be used directly on the cloth to dry it and to take out any print of the cheesecloth. A steam iron may be substituted for the damp press cloth. Be sure to press only on the wrong side of the fabric.

Cut and make the pattern as shown in Figures 7 to 20.



Figure 7.

Lay the cloth on the table, right side up, and find a true bias by folding over one corner so that one edge is exactly on a lengthwise yarn and the other on a crosswise yarn. Mark the bias with pins or a thread. If the holes are likely to show, as they will if the material is rayon, mark by creasing only.

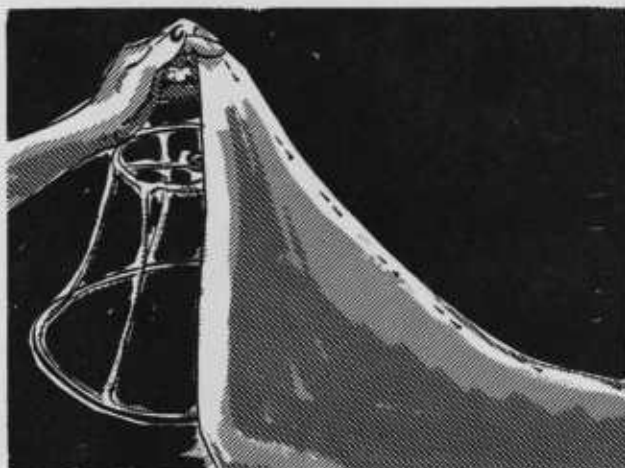


Figure 8.

The bias of the cloth will be at the center of the shade.

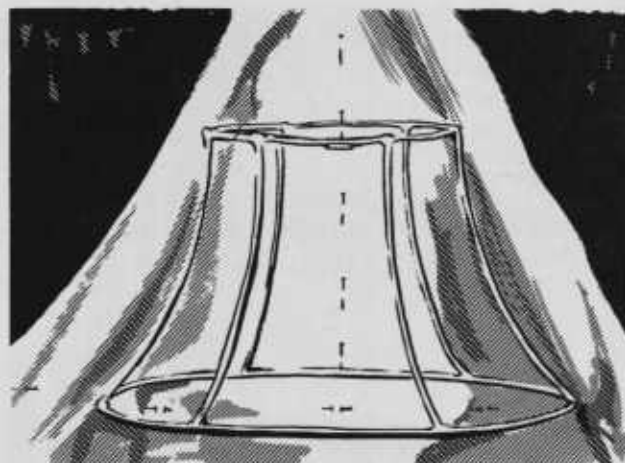


Figure 9.

Lay the cloth, wrong side out, against the frame with the point directly above the center mark on the top ring, and the bias at the center.

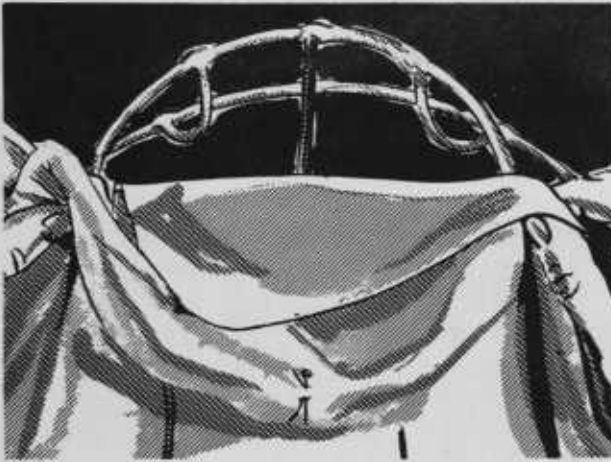


Figure 10.

Raise the cloth until about 1 inch is beyond each rib where a seam will be.

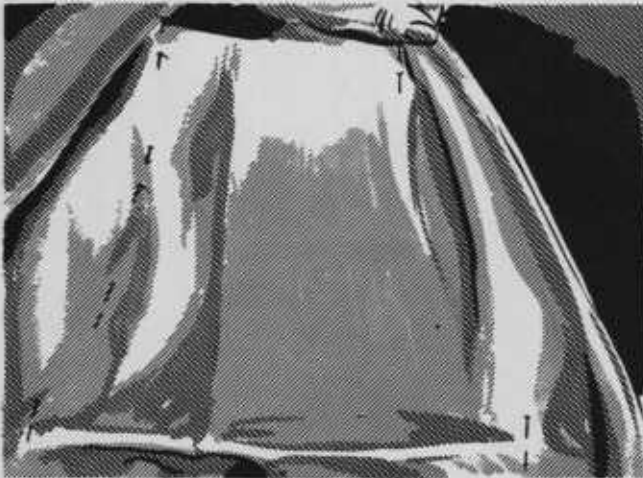


Figure 11.

Tip the frame, and pin the bias at the center mark on the upper and the lower rings. Arrange the cloth so that it lies flat against the ring, and pin the cloth at the lower and upper ends of the seam rib.

Do the same on the other half of the frame. See that there is enough to fit half way around the lower ring and to extend 1 inch beyond each seam rib and 1 inch below the lower ring.



Figure 12.

Place a few pins 2 or 3 inches beyond the rings as guides in cutting.

If you are not sure that you have enough fabric to cut the second half, take your pattern off and check it. Fold your material in half to check your yardage.



Figure 13.

Repin the pattern to the frame to allow the material to lie flat.



Figure 14.

Trim off the extra cloth.

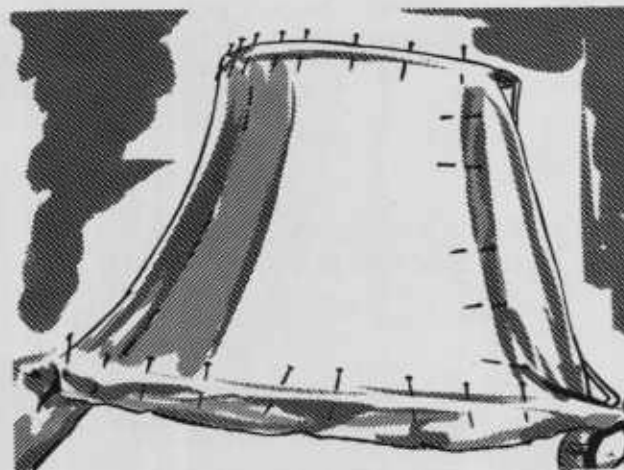


Figure 15.

Pin the material as shown: first at the center, then on the lower and upper ends of the two ribs where seams will be. Pull the material on the straight grain and more firmly around the rings than up and down. Fit the material and pin it, working first on the lower ring then on the upper. Pin at half distances, then at the quarters, then between, until pins are close enough together to hold the cloth. At the ribs, pin under the wire, unless the marks will show. If so, pin to hold the cloth on the rings beyond the ribs.

Take care not to pull the grain out of shape.

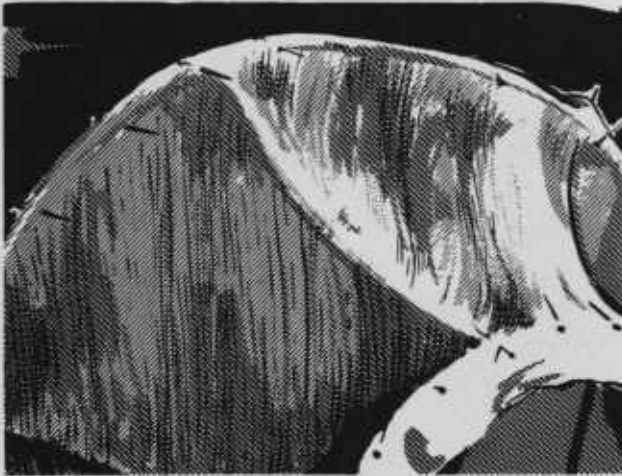


Figure 16.

The grain straightened.

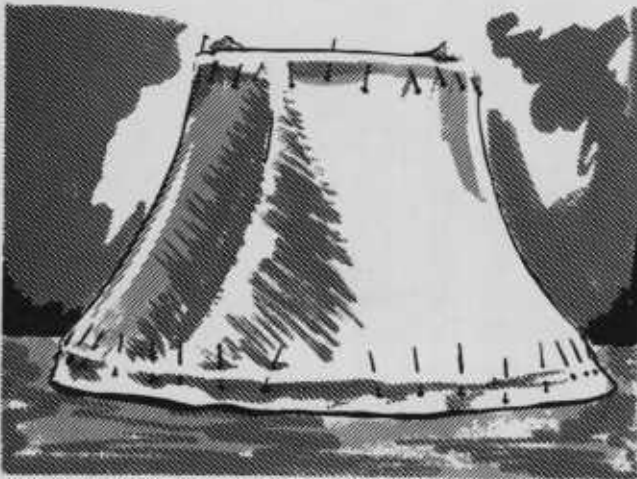


Figure 17.

The shade is out of shape because the cloth has been drawn more tightly at one side than at the other.

Recheck until your pattern is accurate and complete.



Figure 18.

Holding the cloth firmly and keeping the grain in place, mark lightly with a pencil around the rings.

Mark also at the ribs.

Remove the pins that hold the material to the frame.

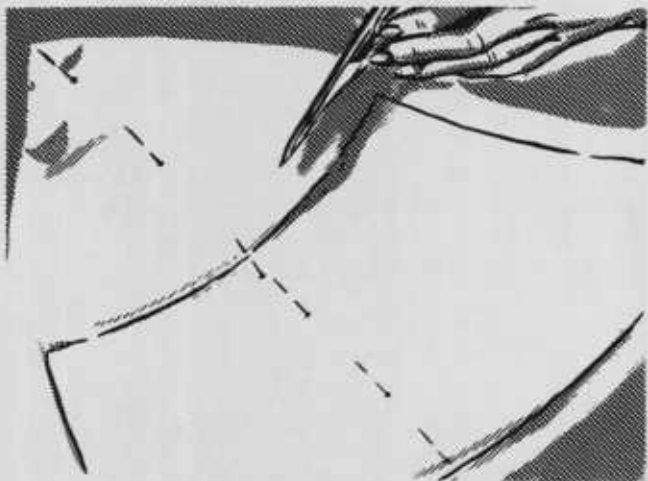


Figure 19.

Trim around the four sides, allowing at least 1 inch beyond the pencil lines.

Check your pattern. Fold it in half and pin the two sides together. Place the heads of the pins at the upper and lower corners. Pin the pencil lines together.



Figure 20.

Check the height of the pattern; it should be the same throughout. Because the center is on the bias it is likely to be shorter than the sides.

Repin and remark the lines until the pattern lies flat and the lines correspond.

Cut and make the cover -- Cut and make the cover as shown in Figures 21 to 25.

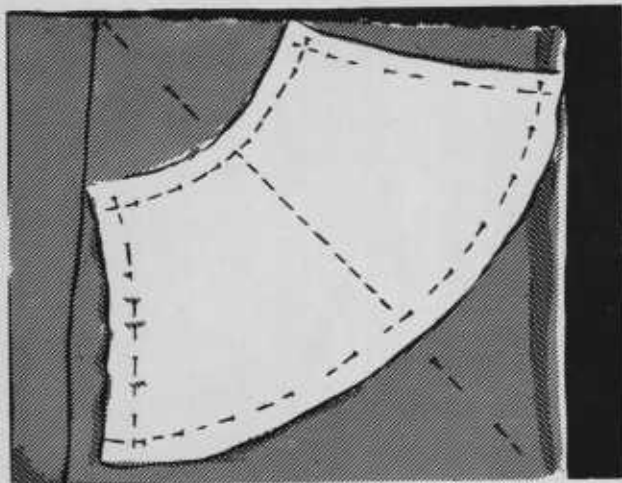


Figure 21.

If the material for the cover was not used in fitting, cut the cover from the pattern. Place the pattern so that all the pencil marks on the cover material will be on the wrong side, and pin on the pencil lines.

Mark the under side of the cover along the pin lines and on the center marks. As you take off the pattern, replace enough pins to hold the two halves of the cover together.

Mark the upper side, either repinning or following the pin holes if they show.



Figure 22.

Baste a seam $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in from the pencil lines of the side seams. If the rib wire is curved, the seam should be curved.

Try the cover on, right side out. Put in enough pins to hold it in place. Pencil lines should lie along the rings. No adjustment should be needed. If, however, the cover is a little loose, make the seam deeper.

Under the seam place a piece of firm paper wide enough to support the cloth. Machine stitch on the basting line, back-stitching each end for about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch inside the pencil line.



Figure 23.

Tear off the paper.

Trim the edges of the seam to about $\frac{3}{16}$ inch.



Figure 24.

Paint the edges with colorless nail polish. Hold the seam to prevent the polish from dropping on the shade.

Refit the cover. To be sure the seam is under a rib where it shows least, place the shade over a lighted bulb. Pin to hold it in place and be sure also that the seam allowance is turned in the same direction throughout its length. Arrange the fabric evenly around the rings, pulling it on the straight grain.



Figure 25.

Sew the cover to the frame and trim the edges. First sew the cover to the lower ring and then to the upper one. Work from the outside of the shade. Hold the seam allowance firmly with one hand and sew with the other, taking slanting stitches through the cloth and the tape. Support your hand against the wire, not on the cloth. Be sure the stitches are near enough together to hold the cover firmly. Trim the edges level with the outside of the rings.

Paint the edges with colorless nail polish.

Cut and make the lining --

Place the pattern to cut the lining or to find the bias as you did for the outside cover.

Pin along the pencil lines at the ribs. Around the rings pin $\frac{1}{4}$ inch beyond the pencil lines. Cut two pieces for the lining.

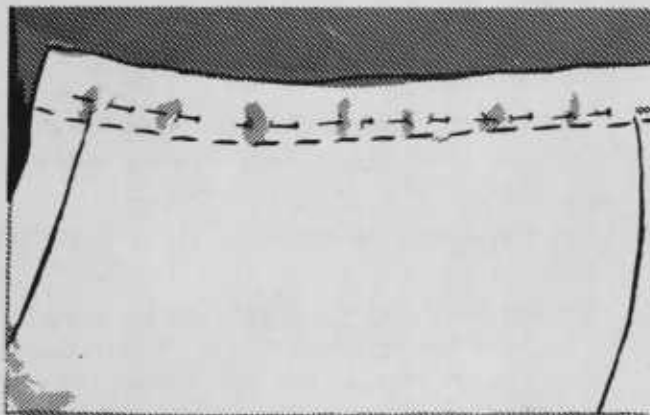


Figure 26.

Baste the seams, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in from the pencil lines at the lower edge and taper to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch at the top.

Try the lining on to see that it fits. Stitch the seams over paper, and back-stitch each end as before. Tear off the paper, trim the seam to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, and paint the edges.

Place the lining on the inside of the frame, right side out; carefully fit and pin it in place on both rings. Bring the pencil lines well around to the outside of the ring.

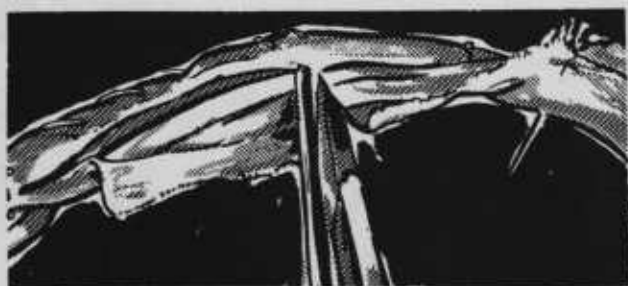


Figure 27.

Slash to fit around cross wires.



Figure 28.

Sew the lining.



Figure 29.

Cover the slashes at the cross wires with strips of cloth either before or after the upper edge of the lining is sewed: cut bias strips from the lining material, one for each cross wire and each not more than 1 inch wide and 3 inches long. Fold the cloth so that the raw edges meet the center. Lay this fold around the cross wire, crossing the ends and making it cover the cut.

Sew the ends on the outside of the ring, trim them to the edge of the lining and paint.

Folds to cover seams -- Folds may be used to cover seams as shown in Figures 30 and 31.

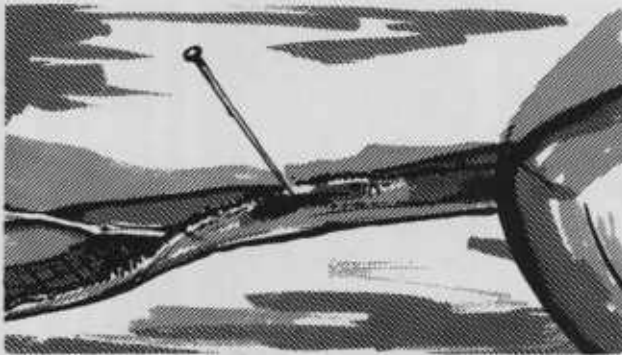


Figure 30.

Folds of self material may be used to cover the joining seams, if the shade is large enough and has one or two seams. These folds are put on before the trimming. Cut two bias strips from the cover material, each about 1 inch wide and a little longer than the length of a side rib. Place the strip on an ironing board, wrong side up, and pin one end firmly. Overlap the raw edges, stretch, pin, and press flat.

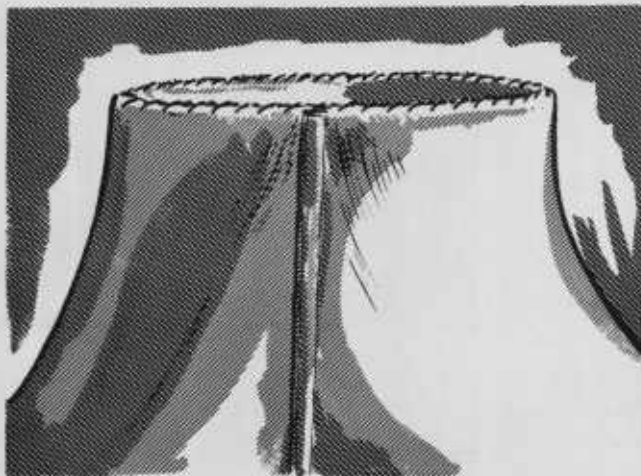


Figure 31.

Place the fold over the seam so that it will cover it when the shade is lighted. Holding it slightly tight, sew the fold to the outside cover, using long running stitches that show little on the outside. Do not catch through the lining.

A standing-fell seam may be used instead of a fold. Stitch the seam, then trim one edge. Paint the other edge, turn it under and against the first edge and stitch close to the first stitching.

Trimming the shade

Trimming that are to be laid flat against the frame should extend a little beyond the upper and lower edges of the wires. To make them fit well, stretch the trimming a little around the lower ring and leave it slightly full around the upper ring. Pin the trimming to hold it in place and tack it in place around both rings.

Types of trims are listed under supplies needed to make a lampshade. A piping of grosgrain ribbon cut lengthwise so that it is narrow enough to fit around the curve may be used. Fit carefully and sew it around the rings. Use a lighter-colored rayon bias tape to cover the raw edges of the ribbon.

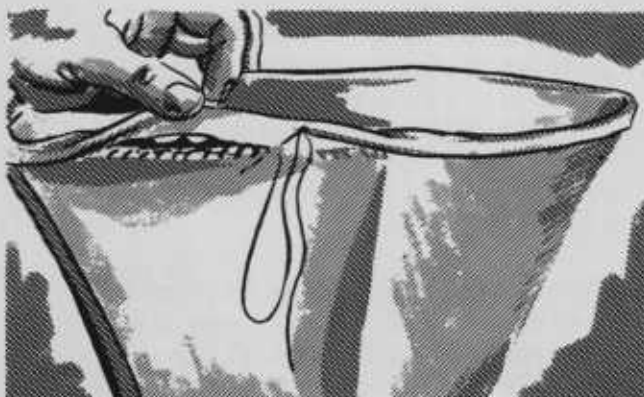


Figure 32.

The trimming may be a fold of material like the cover, or of another kind. Cut bias strips about 1 1/2 inches wide and long enough to go around the rings, plus seam allowances. Fold in half, with the right side out and the raw edges together. Lay this fold against the rings with the raw edges near them and the folded edge beyond. Measure the exact length around each ring, stretching the bias slightly around the lower ring and allowing it to be slightly full around the upper ring. This will let the folded edges lie flat when they are turned against the shade. Pin and stitch bias seams on the wrong side of the material. Again place the folds against the shade and sew to hold them in place and to cover previous sewing. Roll the folded edges against the outside cover and tack at a few places.

Trimming with straight edges often can be sewed in the same way as the fold of cloth. The lining rather than the cover may be sewed first, the cover then trimmed, the edge turned under, and sewed. This method would also be used if trimming such as cording is to be inserted between the lining and the outside.

CLEANING A FABRIC LAMPSHADE

Fabric shades with painted designs or applique ornaments and those made of fabrics that may shrink when wet should be dry-cleaned. Other fabric shades, either plain or pleated, can be washed, provided the cloth has not become too brittle from the heat of the lamp to stand washing; the trimmings are sewed not glued, to the frame; and the frame has been painted to prevent rusting.

Before washing, remove the surface dirt with a soft brush or a hand vacuum cleaner or by fastening the shade to a clothesline out of doors away from the sun and in a slight breeze.

For washing, select a container large enough and deep enough to hold the shade and to have it completely covered with water. Laundry tubs are suitable, especially for large shades.

Make a solution of lukewarm water and mild soap suds. Be sure all the soap is dissolved and that there is plenty of water.

Fill a second tub with clear water, of the same temperature.

Hold the shade by the top wires, drop it quickly in the soapy water, and gently swish it up and down and around in the suds until it is clean. Keep the shade under water as much as possible. A very soft brush may be used to loosen the dirt; brush gently from the top to the bottom and in a circular motion around the trim. If the fabric is badly soiled, a second suds may be needed. Proceed quickly but gently.

Rinse the shade in water of the same temperature, again by dipping the shade up and down. Rinse in several waters, until the water is clear.

Dry rapidly; otherwise the wire frame, unless it is painted or lacquered, may rust and mark the material. On a warm breezy day hang the shade out of doors, away from the sun, suspending it from the clothesline by a cord tied around the top wires. If the shade has to be dried indoors, hang it over, but not directly on, a register or a radiator. If possible, use an electric fan to hasten the drying. A paper or cloth over the register protects the shade from furnace dust during the drying.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This material is adapted from the bulletin:

How to Make Lampshades by Comstock and Robinson,
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